

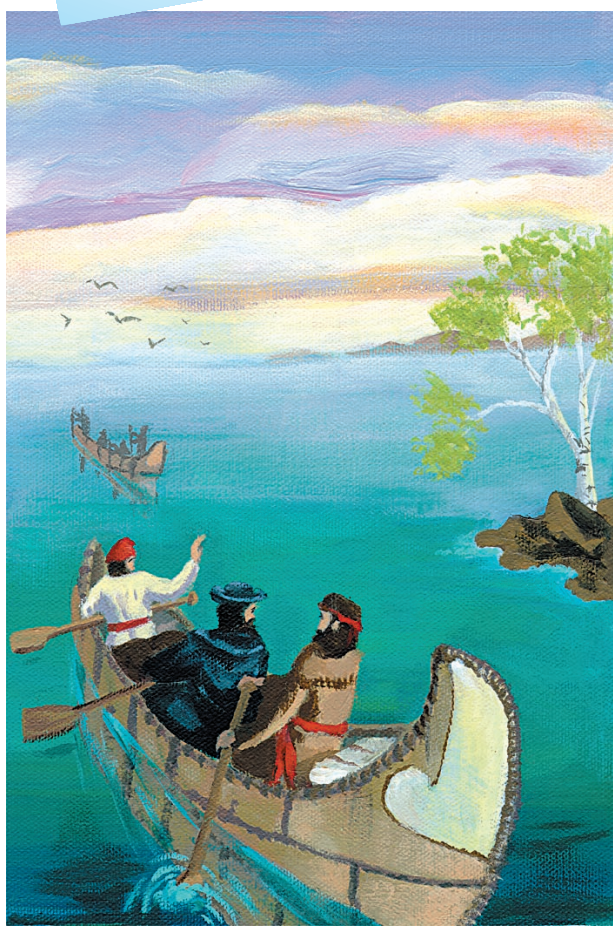
Michigan Time Traveler

An educational supplement produced by Lansing Newspapers In Education, Inc. and the Michigan Historical Center Foundation.

KIDS' History

Travel with Father Jacques Marquette

This month's Time Traveler journeys with Father Marquette as he travels by birch bark canoe for thousands of miles exploring the New World over three hundred years ago.



On May 17, 1673, Father Marquette set forth from the Straits of Mackinac on his adventurous journey down the Mississippi River. Artist: Carolyn Damstra/Michigan History magazine

Who Was Father Marquette?

Father Jacques Marquette was a Jesuit missionary who worked in St. Ignace and was one of the first Europeans to explore the Mississippi.

Born in Laon, France, in 1637, he received his bachelor's degree from the Jesuit University of Reims and joined the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). His goal was to become a missionary converting people to Christianity in North America. He was sent to French North America, called Nouvelle France (New France).

Father Marquette first went to Quebec and Trois Rivières. While there, he spent about a year and a half studying Native American languages and customs.

In 1668, he went with Brother Louis Boeme to Sault Ste. Marie to found a mission and build a chapel for the Chippewa and Ottawa who lived and fished there. He then worked at the mission of St. Esprit near present-day Ashland, Wisconsin.

While there, Marquette met members of the Illinois tribe and learned of a great river that might be a route to a southern or western sea. Next, he went with the migrating Huron people to the Straits of Mackinac and established the St. Ignace mission. It was from there that he traveled to the great river he had heard about—the Mississippi.



Professional actor Michael Burden portrayed Father Marquette at a recent special event unveiling new exhibits at the Father Marquette Memorial in St. Ignace.

Down the Mississippi

Father Marquette and explorer Louis Jolliet spent the winter of 1672-73 preparing to explore the Mississippi River. They talked to many Indians and made a map showing the approximate route from St. Ignace to the Upper Mississippi.

They began their journey in May. Marquette was the translator. He also worked to convert the Indians to Christianity. They looked for areas that could be developed economically—for future settlements, mining and fur trading. They also wanted to know if the Mississippi River went west to California and the Pacific Ocean.

On June 17, 1673, they entered the Mississippi River. On June 25, they met Illinois Indians. They continued down the river to present-day Arkansas. They had gone far enough to know that the river was not a water route to the Pacific and Asia, so they turned around. In all, they traveled over 2,500 miles in about five months.

A Time Line:

- 1637:** Jacques Marquette is born in Laon, France.
- 1641:** Two Jesuit priests, Isaac Jogues and Charles Raymbault, are among the first European travelers to Michigan.
- 1654:** Marquette enters the Jesuit order.
- 1666:** Marquette is ordained as a priest, leaves for New France and arrives in Quebec.
- 1668:** Jacques Marquette and Louis Boeme establish the first mission in Michigan at Sault Ste. Marie.
- 1669:** Father Marquette takes charge of the mission of St. Esprit at the western end of Lake Superior.
- 1671:** Father Marquette follows Huron and Ottawa Indians to the Straits of Mackinac and establishes the mission at St. Ignace.
- 1673:** Father Marquette, Louis Jolliet and five men leave St. Ignace to explore the Mississippi River.
- 1675:** Returning to establish a mission among the Illinois, Father Marquette dies on the shores of Lake Michigan.

Father Marquette's Journal

As an explorer and a missionary, Father Marquette kept journals about his travels. He recorded discoveries, explorations and conditions in North America and his life with the Indians.

We were about to begin a voyage, the duration of which we could not foresee. Indian corn, with some smoked meat, constituted all our provisions; with these we embarked—Monsieur Jolliet and myself, with 5 men—in 2 bark canoes, fully resolved to do and suffer everything for so glorious an undertaking. . . .

On the 17th day of May 1673, we started from the mission of St. Ignace at Michilimackinac. . . . The joy that we felt at being selected for this expedition animated our courage. . . . We obtained all the information that we could from the savages who had frequented those regions; and we even traced out from their reports a map of that new country. . . .

After proceeding 40 leagues on this same route, we arrived at the mouth of our river; and, at 42 and a half degrees of latitude, we

safely entered Missisipi [sic] on the 17th of June, with a joy that I cannot express.

Finally, on the 25th of June, we perceived some tracks of men. . . . After walking about 2 leagues, we discovered a village on the bank of a river, and two others on a hill. . . . On hearing the shout, the savages quickly issued from their cabins. . . . I therefore spoke with them first, and asked them



who they were. They replied that they were Illinois; and as a token of peace, they

Michigan Historical Museum artist Rich Geer (left) works with a team to install a floor map that illustrates Father Marquette's travels.

offered us their pipes to smoke. They afterward invited us to enter their village, where all the people impatiently awaited us.

Hitherto, we had not suffered any inconvenience from mosquitoes; but we are entering into their home, as it were. This is what the savages of this quarter do to protect themselves against them. They erect a scaffolding, the floor of which consists only of poles, to that it is open to the air in order that the smoke of the fire made underneath may pass through, and drive away those little creatures, who cannot bear it. . . .

After a month's navigation, while descending Missisipi [sic] from the 42nd to the 34th degree, and beyond, and after preaching the Gospel as well as I could to the nations that I met, we start on the 17th of July from the village of the Akensea, to retrace our steps. We therefore reascend the Missisipi [sic] which gives us much trouble in breasting its currents.



This four-year-old girl points to Port Huron on the floor map. She and her grandfather, a French voyageur reenactor, traveled from Port Huron to participate in French Heritage Days festivities.

At the Michigan Historical Museum

The Michigan Historical Museum is located two blocks west of the Capitol in downtown Lansing. Museum admission is free. Hours: Monday-Friday: 9 a.m. – 4:30 a.m.; Saturday: 10 a. m. – 4:00 p.m.; Sunday: 1-5 p.m. The museum telephone hotline: (517) 373-3559.

- Visit the Woodland diorama—see the birch bark canoe and learn about the fur trade.
- **On-line:** Visit our Web site: <http://www.michiganhistory.org>.

Things To Do:

- Visit the Father Marquette National Memorial overlooking the Straits of Mackinac. It tells the story of the meeting of French and Native American cultures in North America. Daily attractions include the new exhibits, a 15-station interpretive trail and panoramic views of the Mackinac Bridge.
- Visit the Father Marquette National Memorial site on-line: <http://www.michiganhistory.org/museum/musemarq/>.
- Learn more about Father Marquette and the French voyageurs, check out <http://www.michiganhistorymagazine.com/kids/issues.html>. Read *The French in Michigan*; *Mackinac*; *The Gathering Place*; and *The Three Fires*.



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